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THE ARMENIAN PARABLE “ZOROASTER’S LAUGHTER” AND THE PLOT OF ZOROASTER’S BIRTH IN THE LITERARY TRADITIONS

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In the “Collections of Vardan’s Parables” by the Armenian fabulist Vardan Aygekc‘i published by Nicolas Marr in St. Petersburg, 1894-1899, we found a parable titled “Zoroaster’s laughter”. It turned out to be one of the most uncommon allusions to the Ancient Iranian Prophet Zoroaster in the Armenian literature (apart from the writings by Movses Khorenac‘i, Eghishe, Eznik and Towmay Arcruni. – Jackson 1899, pp. 274–278). The parable “Zoroaster’s laughter” has never been translated into foreign languages, it has never been studied and remains unknown to most researchers. The N. Marr’s edition contains the Armenian text only, no mention being made of it in the research section of the work. Neither has the parable been included into the fable collections by Mkhitar Gosh, Vardan Aygekc‘i and Olompian published in Russian translation by Joseph Orbeli (*Orbeli*).

The parable features a famous plot on the miraculous and uncommon birth of the old Iranian Prophet Zoroaster. Related descriptions of Zoroaster’s birth are contained not only in the Iranian literary sources: in the Zoroastrian Middle Persian writings **Dēnkard** and **Vizīdagīhā-ī Zadspram**, in the New Persian Zoroastrian poem **Zarātušt-Nāma**, in the book **Dabistān**, but also in the writings by the Muslim authors Muhammad Sahrastani and Mirkhond. The unusual birth of Zoroaster is also reported in the Classic sources: in “Natural History” by Plinius Secundus, in the “City of God” by Aurelius Augustinus. And, finally, the miraculous birth of Jesus are described in a resembling manner in the apocryphal gospels: the Arab Gospel of the Saviour’s Childhood, in the Protogospel by James and in the Gospel by Thomas on the Childhood of Jesus.

The Armenian parable “Zoroaster’s laughter” is a substantial supplement to this list, and can undoubtedly be of great interest for a large community of experts on the Iranian culture and religious studies in general, therefore we are quoting here the complete Old Armenian text of this parable, as well as its first ever translation made into English:

Ծիծաղ Զրուաստորի

Դարձեալ ասեն իմաստունքն, թէ սահմանքն է ընդլթեամբ. զի մանուկն լալով ծնանի. եւ մինչ ՚ի .իւ. օրն զլալն գիտէ եւ զքնելն եւ ոչ գիտէ ծիծաղիլ. եւ մի ոմն ծիծաղեցաւ, որ անունն Զրուաստոր եւ կատարած նորա չար եղեւ. զի դեւքն այրեցին զնա հրով:

Յուցանէ առակա, թէ պահքն տրտմութիւն [է] յամենայն աշխարհի. որ ոչ ուրախանանք. ապա թէ ուրախանանք ուտելով ՚ի ձիթոյ եւ ՚ի գինոյ եւ չարիք գործելով եւ յիշունց տալով այսպէս կենալով, զպահքն մեր ոչ ընդունի աստուած՝ չարչարիմք մարմնով եւ չարդարանամք հոգով. եւ որպէս սատանայ այրի ՚ի հուր յաւիտենական:

Zoroaster’s Laughter

Again say the wise men that nature is delimited: thus, a child is born crying and till the fortieth day he knows only crying and sleeping, but he ignores laughing. And one smiled whose name was Zruastr (Zoroaster. – A.H.), and his deed became evil, therefore the demons burned him with fire.

This parable shows that the fast being the sadness of the entire world, lest we should rejoice, and that if we (at the time of the fast) enjoy relishing the olives and wine, and doing and speaking evil, and staying in this condition, then our fast will not be accepted by God, He will grind down the body and will not exonerate the spirit, and commit to the

eternal fire, as if it were done to the Satan (Marr, II, p. 274; I, "Смех Зороастра", CCIII, § 290, 301.)

The parable on "Zoroaster's laughter" shows in its entirety the negative attitude of the Armenian Christian Theology to the doctrine of the Old Iranian Prophet Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrian religion. Laughter, being inadmissible for the Christian theology at the birth of a child instead of the customary and natural crying, was interpreted as a sinister omen, which is illustrated by the tragic fate and death of Zoroaster. In the course of forty days following the birth, the infant must cry and sleep, rather than rejoice. Zoroaster, contrariwise, laughed at birth, committed evil in life, and was punished for that by the demons by burning him with fire.

The moral of the parable is associated with the sorrowful fast for the sake of Jesus Christ, observed by the orthodox Christians until Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus. It is named quarantine, for Jesus himself fasted 40 days. The 40-day period after birth, when the infant suffers and cries, is equated to Lent which prescribes to mourn on the crucifixion of Jesus, not to do evil, to rejoice and to pass the time in festive entertainment. A sinner is confronted with impending punishment similar to the one that befell Zoroaster: he shall be tortured and burnt in the eternal fire.

The author of this parable, Vardan Aygekc'i, follows the tradition of the Armenian theologians, historians and writers established since the 5th century, to condemn the Zoroastrian doctrine. This tradition is also traceable in one of the writings by Aurelius Augustinus.

St. Aurelius Augustinus of Hippo (354-430), an early Christian Church father, was also very profound in interpreting the symbolic birth of Zoroaster in Chapter 14th of his famous work "The City of God" named "On temporary punishments in this life incurred by man." The basic thesis by St. Augustinus is that life experienced by us, the mortals, is punishment by itself, for it is temptation. Our childhood, indeed, ushers us into this life with tears, rather than with laughter, so that no one is able to foretell the diseases and troubles encountered by us. Zoroaster was the only one to laugh when being born, and this unnatural omen promised nothing good to him. He was an inventor of magic arts, although they in reality could warrant even a scrawny well-being to him in this life or safeguard him from foes. St. Augustinus, following the Antique tradition, thinks that Zoroaster was the Bactrian king and was defeated by Nino, the king of Assyria.¹ Concluding his reasoning, he appeals to the words from the Holy Scripture: "...*An heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things.*"

Plinius Secundus (23-79), relating in his "Natural History" that Zoroaster laughed when being born instead of crying, added that the child's brain was trembling so violently that it pushed away a hand touching the child's head, which was an omen of the forthcoming wisdom.²

The Preface to the Scandinavian Younger Edda (Prose Edda) by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) (Edda Snorra Sturlusonar, Formáli, 2), the Icelandic poet and historian mentions Zoroaster as the first idolater, Assyrian king and one of the 72 builders of the Tower of Babel: "He laughed prior to crying when being born" (*Hann hlō, fyrr enn hann grē, er hann kom ī verōldina*).

Dedicated to the birth and life of Zoroaster was the unpreserved **Spend Nask** – the thirteenth *Nask* of the Sasanid version of the Avesta. Its concise variant in Middle Persian is contained in Dēnkard, the Zoroastrian compilation encyclopaedia by Adurfarnbag Farrokhzad and Adurbad Emed, 9th c. (*Dēnkard*, VIII. 14). The first section of Spend Nask related the creation of the material world, the immortal soul of Zoroaster (*frawahr*), the meeting of his parents and his birth by his mother (*čyōn paywastan ī ō zāyīdārān madan ī zāyīdārān āgenēn, hambawīhistan ī andar mādar ud zāyišn ī az mādar*), the appearance of two spirits: one intended for creation, the other one for ruin, the triumph of the good spirit, and the upbringing of Zoroaster (*ud abar-iz rasīdišn ī har dō mēnōg, ān ī weh pad waxšēnīdan ud ān [ī] wattar pad marzēnīdan, pērōzgarīh [ī] ān ī weh mēnōg ud parwarišn ī Zartuxš*) (*Dēnkard*, MS B, ed. by M. J. Dresden, p. 107).

The preserved sections of the Avesta have not retained evidence on the birth of Zaratuštra. The “young Avestan” hymn Ard Yasht dedicated to Aša (Arta) deity, contains the following reminiscence: “And so answered to her Spitama Zaratuštra (§18) who was the first of men to have praised Aša Vahišta, revered Ahura Mazdā, revered Aməša Spənta, whose birth and growth made waters and plants rejoice, whose birth and growth made the waters and plants grow, whose birth and growth made Anhra Mainyu escape from this vast earth (§19)”.³

In all religions, the birth of its founder is accompanied by supernatural prodigies and miracles: appearance of a star, earthquakes, manifestation of the joys of nature. The birth of Zoroaster was a response to the righteous prayers of his father addressed to Haoma. According to the late Zoroastrian tradition, Zoroaster’s life is threatened by the idol worshippers headed by the Turanian *karap* Dūrāsrōb (literally: *dumb, unheeding, one distant from understanding, obedience, a fool*), reminiscent of the “Avestan” Herod. The assassination attempt was undertaken when Zoroaster was still in the cradle. There were also vain attempts to burn the infant in the fire, to trample him using a herd of oxen and a drove of horses.

The demons burning Zoroaster in the fire are to be understood as the known adversaries of the Zoroastrian doctrine – the infidel *kavi* and *karaps*. The Zoroastrian legend has retained the names of the five brothers, the heathen priests of the Tuiria tribes whose names are evidently a later invention: **Brād-rūxš** – *brother terrible, stunning*, **Brād-rōyšn** – *brother brilliant*, **Brād(rōg)-rēš** – *brother inflicting mortal wounds*, **Hazān** – *robber (?)*, and **Wadast** – *bastard (?)* (*Zadspram*, XV.3, XVII.6). One of those, **Brādrōg-rēš**, was to become, according to the legend, Zoroaster’s killer (Dēnkard, Bundahišn, Sad-dar, Dabistān). That resulted from a tremendous invasion into the Northern areas of Aryana-Dahyu (in Dēnkard: Ērān-Deh)⁴ by the Tuiria (Turs). As reported indirectly by later sources, Zoroaster and other Magi were performing the liturgy in the Temple of Sacred Fire in Balkh, when it was all of a sudden invaded by hordes of enemies.

The Avesta, too, contains an allusion to Zoroaster’s martyrdom. In the Yašt XV, dedicated to the deity of wind and air Vayu, compiled probably by a woman of the Vištaspā clan, contains a curious incantation by the divinity himself (having, however, two hypostases: the good and the evil), the second part of this incantation being an address by Vayu to Zoroaster himself, starting with the words: “Call me by these names” (*tāscā-mē nqma zbaiiāēša*) (49-56). He asks Zoroaster to call to him amidst the devastating enemy hordes (*yim aṇtarə haēnaiiā xrūišiēitiš*), amidst the advancing troop formations (*aṇtarə ham-yaṇta rasmaoiīō*), amidst the warring countries (*aṇtarə daiṇhu pāpəratāne*). The § 50 contains possible allusions to Zoroaster’s martyrdom. He asks him to call on him when the omnipotent tyrant cracks down upon him (*sāsta daiṇhəuš hamō-xšaθrō patəntəm*), assaults him (*vā zbarəntəm*), inflicts mortal injuries (*vā iriṣəntəm*), assaults him from the chariot (*vā raθdiṣəmnəm*), deprives him of his possessions (*vā paitiṣəntəm θrimahe*), of his stamina (*paitiṣəntəm baēšaziiehe*). In the § 51 he calls on him to do the same things, when he is assaulted by the iniquitous *Ašəmaogs* – “the destroyers of Aša” (*ašəmaoyəm anašauuanəm*). In his last address to Zoroaster he says to him: “(§56) If you make offerings to me (*yezi mām yaštō kərənauuāni*), I will tell you speeches (*azəm tē vaca framrauūāni*), created by Mazdā, gracious (*mazdaδāta xʾarənaṇhuuanta*), healing (*baēšaziia*), lest you should be destroyed either by Anhra Mainyu, the most pernicious (*yaθa θwqm nōiṭ tauruuiiāi aṇrō mainiiuš pouru-mahrkō*), nor magicians, nor magician’s henchmen (*nōiṭ yātō nōiṭ yatumā*), nor demons, nor people (*nōiṭ daēuuō naēda mašiiō*)”.

Spitama, nicknamed Zaratuštra (MP. Zartuxšt, Avest. *Zaratuštra*, Gr. Ζωροάστρης), perhaps was not the first-born, he had four brothers, two of whom were his elders: Ratūštar, literally “main camel”, and Rangūštar “high-bred or rapid camel”. The remaining two brothers were born after him: the juniors – *Nodarīgā ? “the youngest”, and *Niwēdiš “ignorant; handicapped” (*Zadspram*, XV, 5). It is known that Zoroaster’s brothers, too, were ill-disposed towards him. However, within the Middle Persian tradition, they contrasted with the five mentioned brothers from the Tuiria tribe.

Zoroaster’s father Pourušaspa (“(one having) grey, or spotted, horses”), perhaps valued

camels, since he named his three elder sons after those animals. A special role of the camels has been multiply underscored in the Avesta. Also true is the opinion of H.H. Scheder stating that Zoroaster had lived in a locality that valued camels.⁵

The initial section of Ard Yašt (*Yašt XVII*, §7, 13) completed by Aša singing about the beauty and gracefulness of Zoroaster, narrates, e. g., on the men favoured by Aša who rule the possessions (*narō xšaθra xšaiiēte*), and have camels roaring loudly, with big chests and hump on the back, nimble, they rise from the ground and stubbornly dash into battle:

aēšqm uštrāñhō baiiēte
saēni-kaofa aš-manan̄ha
aojaiieni zəmat̄ pərətamna vadairiiauuō.

The camels in Ard Yašt are allotted a second role in the Army following the glorification of the loudly braying horses (*aspāñhō baiiēte*) harnessed into magnificent chariots (*raom vāšəm vāšaiiēte*) and carrying brave warriors, praisers of gods (*taxməm staotārəm vazənti*) (see *Yašt XVII*, §12, 13).

Beside the name Zaratuštra (his brothers' names Ratūštar and Rangūštar⁶ were preserved only in a later Pahlavi rendering), the Avesta contains some more names associated with a camel having a component *-uštra* "camel". Those are the names of the heroes whose *fravašis* are revered in the memorial part of Fravardin Yašt. Among them was Jamaspa's brother from the tribe Huuōguua Frašaoštra (*Yašt*, 13.103) whose name can be translated as "one having an excellent camel (avest. *Frašaoštra-*); Vohuštra, son of Axnanha (*Yašt*, 13.122) whose name evidently means "one having a good camel" (avest. *Vohuštra-*); Arauuaoštra, son of Ərəzavant-danheuš (*Yašt*, 13.124), whose name is ambiguously translated: "(one having a) non-roaring camel" (H. Bailey), or "(one having a) quiet/slow camel" (*Bartholomae*); one of the heroes was Uštra, son of Sadanah (*Yašt*, 13.115) had a simple name "camel" (Avest. *Uštra-*) (*Mayrhofer*, pp. 20, 40, 86, 99).

The laughter of the new-born Zoroaster is also mentioned by the Pahlavi writings. In the seventh book of the Zoroastrian encyclopaedia "Dēnkard" (9th c.) dedicated to miraculous events of the Zoroastrian religion (*Dēnkard VII*, 3. 2–3, 24–25), the wonderful birth of Zoroaster is also rated among the miracles associated with the Prophet's life. This book once constituted the fourth section of the unpreserved Avestan Spend Nask. One of the miracles was that having been born, Zoroaster laughed (*ēk ēn paydāg kū-š pad zāyišn bē xandīd*). The seven midwives sitting around were scared out of their senses (*az ōy bē tarsīd hēnd 7 *dāyag ān-iš pērāmōn nišast hēnd*). Fearfully they asked whether it was a display of greatness or scorn (malice, ill nature), for, as the satisfaction (joy) of a man is stipulated by his activity, likewise, the same things occur to a minor who laughed during his own birth (*awešān guft bē tarsišn kū cē būd mehīh ayāb tarmenišnīh rāy ka čiyōn mard ī arzōmand xwēškarīh rāmišn ēdōn mard aburnāyag u-š pad zāyišn bē xandīd*). Porušasp laid the infant on a sheepskin and said to Duxdova: "What happened is due to you and your virtue, Duxdova, for everyone saw the risen grace and divine radiance on this infant when he laughed during his own birth (*ka-š pad zāyišn bē xandīd*) (*Dēnkard*, MS B, ed. by Dresden, p. 344; *Pahlavi Texts*, Part V, 1897, p.35).⁷

There is another Zoroastrian Middle Persian writing describing the birth of Zoroaster, viz. "Vīzīdagihā-i Zadspram", compiled by the learned priest Zadspram, son of Juvan-Jāma (late 9th c.). The section with Chapter XII to Chapter XXIII, starting with enumerating the long bloodline of Zoroaster can be called the "Zoroastrian Gospel". Chapter XIV describes the birth of Zoroaster (*Vīzīdagihā-i Zadspram*, XIV, 12–17). To protect Zoroaster from the forces of evil, Ōhrmazd sent Vohuman ("Virtuous Thought"), one of the Immortal Saints, to his help. Vohuman entered inside the infant's soul, and Zoroaster laughed, since Vohuman was a spirit that gave joy and pleasure. Sitting next to him were several magicians who by virtue of the bright light illuminating the dwelling saw him laugh, which was in contradiction to the custom of the rest of mankind, who used to cry when being born, and they horrified at what they saw. With

his birth at the same time, Zoroaster accepted the faith from Ōhrmazd, and when he started to speak, he proclaimed the text that was to become "Ahunvar", the major Zoroastrian prayer. On the next day Porušasp saw the magicians and asked them: "By what reason do the infants cry at birth, and by what reason do they laugh?" And they answered: "Those who cry, see their death as completion of their life, while those who laugh, see their own righteousness" (*Pahlavi Texts, Part V. - SBE, Vol. XLVII, 1897*).

The Muslim authors, too, mention the miraculous birth of Zoratuster. It is described by Muhammad ibn al-Karim aš-Šahrīstānī (1086-1153?), an Arabic-writing Shafī'ī theologian, historian of religions and philosophical teachings, in the work titled "The Book on Religions and Sects" (كتاب الملل و النہال). A book by Xvand-šāh bīn Mahmūd, a Persian-writing historian known as Mir Xvand, or simply Mirkhond (1433-1498), titled "The History of Early Kings of Persia, since Kayumars, the First King of the Pešdadids, to the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great" (the complete Arab title: روضة الصفا فی سیرت الانبیا و الملوك و الخلفاء "The Garden of Wisdom in Life Stories of Prophets, Kings and Khalifs"), contains a reference to the Miraculous birth of Zoroaster in the chapter on the reign of Guštasp (Avest. Vištaspā-). According to Mirkhond, the Gabrs (i.e. Zoroastrians) tell wonderful things about Zoroaster: God had initially created the soul of Zoroaster in a tree placed on the highest part of heaven, then his essence was transferred into a cow, whose milk was taken by Zoroaster's father. Thus it was passed on to his mother. The Devil who set an aim to do away with the child brought upon his mother the pernicious wind of his breath, and she became ill. At the same time the voice from heaven said that she would find cure from this ailment, and she started to get better. Having come into this world, Zoroaster started to laugh so loudly that the whole neighbourhood heard his voice very clearly. Having reached manhood, he withdrew to one of the Ardebil mountains, and when he got down holding a book in his hand, he said that it had been dropped to him from the roof of the house standing on top of that mountain. He called that book Zend, but since its meaning was incomprehensible to people, he wrote an explanation to it and called it Pazend (*History of the early kings of Persia, pp. 285-286*).

The plot of Zoroaster's birth is glorified in "Zarātušt-Nāma" (1278), a poetic composition on the life of Zoroaster in the New Persian language by the Zoroastrian poet Zarātušt Bahrām Paždū (*Zarātušt Nāma, pp. 10, 183-200*). The birth of Zoroaster is also presented here as the first miracle performed by Zoroaster himself. The chapter describing this event is titled: *Mu'jiza-i avval va zādan-i Zarātušt az mādar* – "The first miracle and the birth of Zoroaster by mother":

بدانگه که صبح زمان دیمه داد
زراتشت فرخ ز مادر بزداد
بخندید چون شد ز مادر جدا
درخشان شد از خنده او سرا

*When the time of morning came,
The happy Zoroaster was born by the mother.
When coming out of mother, he laughed,
The whole neighborhood (abode) shone from his laughter.*

At the time of Zoroaster's birth all neighbourhood women gathered in the house of his parents, some even climbed the roof. At dawn, having got out of his mother and come into the world, he started to laugh so that the whole house shone with laughter. His father was completely baffled at his laughter, at the grace and the radiance:

عجب ماند درکار او باب او
ازان خنده و خوبی و آب او

*At what he did his father was surprised,
At his laugh, his virtue and shining bright.*

To himself he thought it was the Grace of God, for all that had been born of mother, cried. The infant was named Zartušt. Soon, both the nobles and the simple people knew of him.

مراورا نهادند زرتشت نام
شدند آگاه از کار او خاص و عام

*And he was named Zartušt,
All knew of him, both the nobles and (ordinary) people.*

The women envied him his laugh and his bright intrusion:

زنانرا حسد خاست از خنده‌اش
وزان طلعت خوب رخشنده‌اش
بماندند از انلوه او در هوس
کزین گونه هرگز ندیدست کس

*The women envied him his laugh
And his bright intrusion.
He tempted them and aggravated their illusion,
Since such (a phenomenon) has never been seen.*

The birth of Zoroaster became known to ill-wishers. At that time there were many magicians who did nothing but sorcery. It was they who believed that the miraculous birth of the boy would be a bad omen.

بشهر اندر افتاد یکسر خبر
ازان خنده و خوبی آن پسر

*Very soon the city filled with the rumours
About this laughing and the boy is goodness.*

The second miracle that befell Zoroaster was the miraculous rescue from the hands of king Durasrun who was the ruler of their kingdom. Having seen the infant Zoroaster, king Durasrun got yellow at once. He commanded one of his servants to seize him. When the infant was seized, the unrighteous king tried to split him in two with a red-hot dagger, so as to get rid of the fear, but his hand got dry as if it were by divine intent. A terrible pain appeared in the king's body, he broke down and fled from the infant's bed.

The prosaic narration in New Persian about the details of Zoroaster's life is retained in the 14th chapter of the 17th century Zoroastrian treatise "Dabistān-ul-Mazāhib" (see Rosenberg). The story of the Prophet's life as maintained by the anonymous author, has been taken by him from the "Šaristān-i čahār čaman" written by Farzana Bahram and Farhad Yazdani. Farzana, on his part, referred to the authoritative tradition of the Zoroastrian theologians, whereby the Supreme God created the Holy Spirit of Zaratuštra, belonging to the Tree of Wisdom. And he is said to have drunk from the cow's milk getting eventually with the rays of light into Duxdova's, his wife's, womb, and thus he begat Zaratuštra. When Zaratuštra came into this world he laughed, so that all the women from neighbourhood heard the voice of his laugh (...xandīd čenānče āvāz-e xande-ye ū-rā zanān-e hamsāye... šenīdand). Then comes a beyt from "Zarātušt-nāma" by Bahrām Paždū expressing the delight and astonishment of Pourušaspa, the father of the Prophet, upon this event:

بدل گفت کین فره ایزد یست
جز این هر که از مادر آمد گریست

*He thought to himself: "It is clearly the Grace of God.
Except him, all others wept when being born by a mother*

The infant then was named Zarātušt (*pas ū-rā Zarātušt nām kardand*). Here his name is supplemented with a Muslim abbreviation in the form of the letter “ع” – (‘ayn), meaning “peace be with him!” (عليه السلام) being used as a rule with the names of the Shi‘ite Imams. It goes on to read that all women envied the laugh of Zoroaster, and all knew about that miraculous event and how Durasrun, the king of the country heard about it and he tried to murder the child (*Ahvālāt-i Zarātušt*, pp. 83-84; *Dabistān*, vol. I, pp. 218-219).

The New Persian legend on the birth of Zoroaster again confirms the future prophet to have been named Zoroaster (Avest. *Zarathuštra*) at the time of his birth by the attending midwives, relatives, and perhaps the parents. The reason for that was the fact that Zoroaster was not at all laughing when being born, as told by a late Zoroastrian legend. Actually, it was a healthy and robust child who, when being born, roared loudly and uncommonly and thus even scared the parents and midwives who made haste to call him Zoroaster, i.e. likened him to the “offended, angered, bold, stubborn, daring” Bactrian camel. Camels are known to emit prolonged shrill sounds reminding of a baby cry. The camels become aggressive, particularly at the mating period, and their roar becomes more determined. This can make it possible to suggest perhaps a more substantiated etymology of the Old Iranian Prophet’s name, both regarding the context and the Avestan grammar. It consists of two parts: the second: *uštra-* “camel”, and the first: **zarat-* (**zarat-*) (participle), or *zarətō* (adjective) “wicked, obstinate, stubborn” (*Yašt*, XI.5), from Old Iran. **zarta-* “wicked, obstinate, angered, offended” (cf. Avest. *zaranimnəm* “angered” (accus.), *zazarānō* “angered” (*Yašt*, XI.5),⁸ *anāzarātā* “not offended” (plural), Russian *злой; злится*, Ind. *hṛīṇīte* “angered”, Old Pers. *dartana-* “wrath”, New Persian *āzār* “insult”). The transition of the voiceless consonant -t- into the voiceless spirant -θ- in the intervocal position in the Avesta is irregular, however, it occurs, cf. *maēθanəm* “abode” and *mitai-ia-* “to abide”.

One of the first to identify the Avest. *-uštra-* as “camel” was Eugene Burnuff; he explained the name of Prophet Zoroaster as *fulvos camelos habens* (“possessing red-haired camels”). According to Fr. Müller who seems to be the first to have suggested a similar translation, the name of the Prophet can be translated as “possessing a bold, courageous camel”. One of the most probable translations of the name of Zoroaster, according to A. Jackson, is “the one whose camels are old”, from the root **zar-* “to grow old”, or “old camel”, by analogy with the Skr. *jarad-gava* “old ox”, *Jarat-kāru* “the name of a wizard”, or otherwise “the one whose camel is violent”, from the root **zar-* “get angry” (*Jackson*, pp. 14, 148).

Most popular lately has been the etymology of the Zoroaster’s name by Chr. Bartholomae (“possessing the old camels”), who had hypothetically constructed the Avest. **zarant-* “old, elderly”, considering Old Ind. *jarant-* and Osset. *zārond* “old”; cf. the Avest. *zauruuā-* “old age”, *zruuān* “time” (*Bartholomae*, S. 1670). However, the Avestan *zar-* can have here also its basic meaning “to shout, to roar, to get angry, to be wicked, stubborn, intransigent”, which is often registered in Avesta, as shown above. Cases with *zar-* in the meaning of “to get old” are scarce and have no pure verbal form. In the Sanskrit the usage of derivatives from a relevant root is proportional (*jar-* is both “to get old” and “to make noise, to sing”), cf. *jarā* “wear and tear, old age”, and *jará* “a scream, noise”; the Sanskrit examples are numerous and rather eloquent. E. g., the adjective *jaraṭha* is perhaps a blend of the two meanings of this root “old, strong, hard, impetuous”.

One of the latest views on the etymology of the name Zoroaster belongs to Helmut Humbach. He assumes that the meaning of the first part remains controversial. Etymologically the name of the Prophet can be associated with the Avest. *zairi-* “yellow” (“possessing the yellow camels”), or with the verbal stem *zar-* “to be angry, enraged, frantic” (“possessing the frantic

camels”),⁹ or, with regard to the Osset. *zäron*d meaning “old” (“possessing the old camels”). In all the etymological versions it is to be stipulated that *zaraθ-uštra-* be relevant to the assumed Young Avestan **zaraṭ.uštra-*.¹⁰ As noted by K. Hoffmann, the preserved name of the Prophet (with *-θ*) contains a phonetic feature alien to the Avestan, and probably characteristic to another Old Iranian language spoken perhaps by the Prophet’s mother. However, H. Humbach admits that the substitution of the original *-ṭ* into *-θ* in the *zaraθ-* and *zaraṭ-* is not unique, cf. *ciθṭ*, clearly from *ciṭ-ṭ* (*Yasna 29.4*) (*Humbach, Part I, SS. 8, 60*).¹¹ Also existing are sceptical viewpoints, thus, Manfred Mayrhofer thinks that the component **Zarat-* remains rather unclear and is not subject to any correct grammatical interpretation (*Mayrhofer, S. 105*).

In the later, degenerated Zurvanite tradition, Zoroaster is now and then featured as the son of Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd). That might be, e. g., reflected in Alcibiades by Plato (427–347 B.C.). Socrates tells the Young Alcibiades about the Persian kings and on the way the royal heirs are brought up. According to Socrates, at the age of seven they are provided with teachers, taught horsemanship and hunting, at fourteen they are transferred to the tutors. One of the tutors teaches them the magic of Zoroaster, son of Oromazd, its essence is in worshipping gods (ὧν ὁ μὲν μαγείαν τε διδάσκει τὴν Ζωροάστρου τοῦ Ὀρομάζου, - ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο θεῶν θεραπεία. – *Plato, Alcibiades I, 121c-122a*).

The legend on Zoroaster being son of Ohrmazd was probably very popular.¹² Yeznik Koṭbac’i, an Armenian theologian of the 5th century, while denouncing the Zurvanite teaching of the Persian Magi, informs on the legend that Ahrmen (Ahriman) invited Hormizd to dinner, but did not want to dine with him until their sons have fought. Ahrmen’s son toppled the son of Hormizd. Then they needed a judge, and for that they created the sun that became the judge (*Ezov, p. 9*). The origin of this myth is clear: the son of Hormizd must be understood as Zoroaster, while the son of Ahrmen is his killer Brād-rēšh, a *karap* from the Tuiria tribe.

NOTES

1. *Aurelius Augustinus, De Civitate Dei, 21.14*: Solum quzndo natus est ferund risisse Zoroastrem, nec ei boni aliquid monstrosus risus ille portendit. Nam magicarum artium fuisse perhibetor inuentor; quae quidem illi nec ad praesentis uitae uanam felicitatem contra suos inimicos prodesse potuerunt, a Nino quippe rege Assyriorum, cum esset ipse Bactrianorum, bello superatus est (Latin text in: *Jackson, p. 246*).
2. *Plinius Secundus, Naturalis Historia, VII.15*: Risisse eodem die quo genitus esset unum hominem accepimus Zoroastrem. Eidem cerebrum ita palpitasse, ut impositam repelleret manum futurae praesagio scientiae.
3. §18 - aḍāt uiti frauuašata / yō spitāmō zaraθuštrō / yō paoriiō mašiiiākō / staota ašəm yat vahištəm/ yazata ahurəm mazdam / yazata aməšə spəntə / yénhe zanθaēca vaxšaēca / uru-uāsən āpō uruuarasča / yénhe zanθaēca vaxšaēca / uxšin āpō uruūārasca / §19 yénhe zanθaēca vaxšaēca / apa-duuaraṭ anrō mainiiuš / haca zəmaṭ yaṭ paṭanaiiā (*Avestan text by: Geldner*).
4. Zaratuštra died 47 years after receiving divine revelation, when he was 77 years old, in the month of Ardavahišt, at the 40th (or 41st) day (Xwar) after the new year (*Dēnkard V, 3.2; VII, 5.1; Zadspram, XXIII. 9*).
5. On the Persepolis reliefs camel is depicted with the Bactrians, Khorezmians and Arakhosians, i.e. namely with those nations on the territory of which the Avesta was probably formed.
6. The Avestan prototypes of these names can be reconstructed respectively as **Ratuštra-* and **Rang/juštra-*.
7. According to the Zoroastrian chronology the miraculous birth of Zoroaster took place 30 years before the beginning of the 9th Millennium from the creation of the world by Ahura Mazda (*Dēnkard, VII, 2.24*).

8. Cf. Yašt XI.5: *nōit dim yauua ainhe aīian nōit ainhā xšapō druua zarətō zaranumano zazarānō ašibiia auua-spašticina aoi auua-spašnaot*. - "this day and this night, the impudent villain intending to inflict him (the righteous) evil, will not be able to give a glance at him with his malicious eyes".
9. This is, of course, a possible interpretation, however it must be referred to the hypothetic Avestan **zairi-uštra-*, which does not correspond the Prophet's real name.
10. Cf. also Ilya Gershevitch's recent considerations on the first part of this compound (*Gershevitch*, p. 23). The etymology proposed by T. Pakhalina for the name of Zoroaster, from **zara-θuštra-* "the ardent defender of the fire; the strenuous protector of the fire; the adherent of the fire" (*Pakhalina*) can not be considered as serious.
11. We do not discuss here H. Baily's interpretation "he who drives camels, he who can manage camels" (*Bailey*, p. 41), as Avestan *zar-* does not have such meanings. However H. Bailey proposed "to find (OIr.) **zar-* "to move, drive", in the name *Zaraθuštra-*" (*ibid.*).
12. The wedding of the son of Ōhrmazd is described in the parable "Aramazd and the snake" by Vardan Aygekc'i. Aramazd celebrated the wedding of his son. All animals came and presented gifts for the newly-weds. The snake appeared and brought a beautiful and fragrant rose. He drove the snake away saying: "It does not behove to accept anything from your mouth full of poison" (*Orbeli*, p. 67). Perhaps it is a reminder of the wedding of Pouručistā, Zoroaster's daughter (*Yasna* 53).

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SBE - see **Pahlavi texts**.

Zarātusht Nāma ta'lif-i Zartušt Bahrām bin Paždū ki bi panj nusxa-yi dastxat muqābila va tashīh yāfta bi sa'y va ihtimām-i Fridrik Rozenbergh, dar šahr-i Peterbūrgh dar sana-yi 1904.